In the Claims

New claim 38 has been added.

Claims 29, 35, and 36-37 are amended as shown below. Underlines indicate insertions; ~~strikethroughs~~ indicate deletions.

1-28. (Cancelled)

29. (Currently amended) An article centering and severing device, comprising:

a treadle including a web guide plate and a guide strip spaced from the guide plate;

a web conveyor having a drive motor, a drive wheel, and a follower wheel configured to co-rotate with the drive wheel to move a web therebetween; and

a knock lever mechanism having a knock lever arm configured to carry at least one of the drive wheel and the follower wheel, the knock lever arm configured to engage a platen as the treadle is moved relative to the platen during a severing operation so as to move the one of the drive wheel and the follower wheel away from another of the drive wheel and the follower wheel to open up a gap therebetween and release a respective edge of the web during such severing operation to facilitate alignment and centering of the web and articles carried by the web.

30. (Previously presented) The article centering and severing device of claim 29 wherein the knock lever mechanism comprises a kinematic linkage having a center pivot, wherein the lever arm is carried at one end of the kinematic linkage and a drive wheel is carried at an opposite end of the kinematic linkage.

31. (Previously presented) The article centering and severing device of claim 29 wherein a pair of knock lever mechanisms are provided one on each edge of the treadle adjacent each respective edge of a web carried therebetween.

32. (Previously presented) An article centering and severing device, comprising:

a web conveyor having a drive wheel, and a follower wheel configured to co-rotate with the drive wheel to move a web therebetween; and

a knock lever mechanism having a knock lever arm configured to carry at least one of the drive wheel and the follower wheel, the knock lever arm configured to engage a platen as a treadle is moved relative to the platen during a severing operation,

wherein one of the drive wheel and the follower wheel is moved away from another of the drive wheel and the follower wheel to open up a gap therebetween in order to release a respective edge of the web during the severing operation to facilitate lateral alignment of the web and articles carried by the web.

33. (Previously presented) The article centering and severing device of claim 29 wherein the knock lever mechanism comprises a kinematic linkage having a center pivot, wherein the lever arm is carried at one end of the kinematic linkage and a drive wheel is carried at an opposite end of the kinematic linkage to enable accurate alignment of the web and the articles carried by the web.

34. (Previously presented) The article centering and severing device of claim 29 wherein a pair of knock lever mechanisms are provided one on each edge of the treadle adjacent each respective edge of a web carried therebetween.

35. (Currently amended) An article centering and severing device, comprising:

a treadle including a web guide plate and a guide strip;

a web conveyor having a drive wheel and a co-rotating follower wheel to move a web therebetween; and

a knock lever mechanism having a knock lever arm configured to carry at least one of the drive wheel and the follower wheel, the knock lever arm configured to engage a platen as the treadle is moved relative to the platen during a severing operation so as to open up a gap between the drive wheel and the follower wheel and release a respective edge of the web during the severing operation to ensure further centering of the web~~, and~~;

wherein the guide strip is provided in close proximity with the web guide plate relative to article apertures in the web guide plate to ensure alignment and positioning of the web and articles carried by the web.

36. (Currently amended) The device of claim 35, further comprising individual punches and corresponding die members, wherein the further centering of the web depends on contour features of the individual punches configured to coact in combination with shape of in-molded articles in the web to laterally further align the articles relative to each respective punch and the corresponding die members.

37. (Currently amended) An article centering and severing device, comprising:

a treadle including a web guide plate and a guide strip;

a web conveyor having a drive wheel and a co-rotating follower wheel to move a web therebetween; and

a pair of knock lever mechanisms with individual knock lever mechanisms provided on each edge of the treadle adjacent each respective edge of a web carried therebetween, the individual knock lever mechanism having a knock lever arm configured to carry at least one of the drive wheel and the follower wheel, the knock lever arm configured to engage a platen as the treadle is moved relative to the platen during a severing operation so as to release a respective edge of the web during the severing operation to ensure further centering of the web~~, and~~;

wherein the guide strip is provided in close proximity with the web guide plate relative to article apertures in the web guide plate to ensure alignment and positioning of the web and articles carried by the web.

Please add the following new claim:

38. (New) The device of claim 35, wherein the gap between the drive wheel and the follower wheel is opened just prior to severing of an article carried by the web to enable the alignment and the positioning of the web and the article.